

**THE HISTORY OF  
HOLME - ON - SPALDING - MOOR  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
(1876 - 1962)**

**BY  
SHEILA V BINNINGTON**

In 1876 a piece of land was bought from Henry Stourton of Holme Hall to build a board, school in Holme-on-Spalding Moor. The site was considered central and the school was to replace the Old School and Selby Road Methodist Church School which up to that date had been used by children in the area.

As far back as 1874 recommendations had been made by the Rev. George G Holmes, vicar of Holme, and Mr Thomas Amos for new school premises.

Mr Thomas Amos was the headmaster of the Old School and there were 264 children on the roll with an average attendance of 154. Miss Annie Lawton was the mistress. The attendances were particularly low as children, especially in this rural area, were expected to work on the land as required and at this time school was not compulsory.

A Catholic School in Moor End was also opened in 1876 for 50 children, with an average attendance of 30 pupils. Miss Agnes King was the mistress.

The school was built in an 'H' shape, with one classroom in the middle and the two long sides used by two classes, infants one end and older children in the other, the oldest children used the middle section. Was this the forerunner of open plan? The headmaster had a raised di<sup>s</sup> in the middle and the children had separate entrances for girls and infant boys at one end and bigger boys at the other. The playground was segregated and there were earth closets across the yard. There was nothing whatever to play with in the playground.

Lessons were very regimented. Reading, arithmetic, scripture, history and geography. Drawing for boys and needlework for girls. There was no craft work, drama or music, although singing did take place, also 'drill' but not PE.

In 1907 Samson Feather became the headmaster. He was a very strict disciplinarian. He expected to be saluted by pupils if met in the street. He carried a cane with him - usually tucked inside the sleeve of his gown which he wore. He did, however, establish the school garden and museum.

The garden was indeed magnificent and must have been well known throughout the area as records show visitors from Leeds University and others. There were fruit trees, roses and flowering shrubs. The older boys each had their own vegetable plots which surrounded the flag pole. The competition to grow the finest produce and make your plot the best was fierce. Anything they grew they could take home, after supplying vegetables for the dinners.

The garden provided vegetables for the senior girls to cook for those children staying to dinner. Dinners were 3d a day for a two course meal although those not having a cooked lunch could have cocoa for 1/2d a cup. The dinners were plain fare, mainly stews, meat and potato pies and they were cooked on a range and served by the big girls. The range stood between, the two coke stoves which were where the spiral staircase is now. The meals were served to the children at their benches although the majority would bring lunch. This would be almost certainly be bread and either dripping or jam.

The big boys were often called out of classes with Mrs Samson Feather to work in the garden. The Autumn and Winter months seem to have been taken over by the getting "the Bastard Trenching" done, before the bad weather and frost to break down the earth. This actually was double digging and banking the sides of the plots. They must have looked very impressive when all were done but probably Mrs Samson Feather, as senior mistress, was not so pleased.

At this time most children walked to school and some would come over the fields. Those from Arglam and Henleys Nursery walked overland. Some from outlying farms came by horse and cart which was the forerunner of the school bus. Those from Arglam came over the fields to Major Bridge where they met up with the other school pals and then they walked together in a group down Selby Road, taking their timing from the trains which ran parallel to the road. Occasionally they did manage to ride if their time was good and got a lift from a friendly bus driver. No one ever doubted the wiseness of accepting these lifts! Very lucky children, maybe one or two had a bike and even those who got new boots were to be envied by those who were the youngest of a large family and only had hand-me-downs.

Games in the playground were seasonal. Marbles, whips and tops, catching games and games derived from what was happening on the farms. At pig killing time the most unfortunate boy was the one 'chosen' by the others to be the 'pig'. He was chased by the others and then when caught tied up and left in the outside closet! A game the boys played was the Eton College Wall game. The boys stood to a wall in a line, one behind the other, bend double and then took turns to see how far up the line they could jump. At harvest time boys sometimes brought a mouse in a matchbox to school which was released at an appropriate moment! When playing catching games the word "kings" was used with crossed fingers to be "out" or have a rest. The girls played a catching game but when caught each girl linked up until a long line was formed to catch the last one. At the end the line was going very fast. The infant boys and girls played in one half of the playground and all the other boys in the other half. The playground was divided by a fence.

At this time Empire Day, 24th May, and Armistice Day, 11th November, were both honoured. The Union Jack was raised and patriotic hymns for Empire Day and two minutes silence and appropriate hymns and prayers were said for Armistice Day.

The school holidays were arranged around the farming calendar. Instead of six weeks in Summer, as we have now, the children of the 1920's had three weeks. This made sure enough labour was available to bring in the harvest. In October there was another three week break, this time to lift potatoes. Very often boys were kept at home to help with the chores on the farm. In this rural area this was very common.

The roll does seem large, although attendances varied to sometimes only half. The large number of pupils does include those from five years to fourteen years of age, this being school leaving age. Boys generally worked on the land after school, either on their family farms or as labourers. Girls were not expected to work other than at home and help with younger brothers and sisters or odd ones in shops or into service.

Even though we would maybe think this a harsh regime some students going on to Selby Technical College or Bridlington School.

Some famous students were Tommy Hawcroft who became Sir Winston Churchill's jockey; Aubrey Burke who lived at the Red Lion and went on to crew the R100 Airship which was built at Howden and Samson Feather's son, Norman, who became a physics lecturer at Edinburgh University. During the war he was a member of the Atomic Bomb research team. Many scholars went away to fight in the second world war and a memorial to them was commemorated but unfortunately this no longer survives. One scholar who returned to tell of his exploits was Gunner Stanley Blackburn, who was on HMS Exeter which fought the Graf Spee. He brought pieces of shrapnel and told of this trips to New York Fair and Monte Video. He said in 1940, "I am ready to go to sea again when the time

comes, nothing can demoralise the Navy".

Several scholars who fell in the First World War were honoured with a brass plaque which now is placed in the admin block.

By 1929 the school was in need of extensive alterations. In August Mr B B Stamford, the County Architect, was brought in to draw plans. In March 1930, Mr Carrick of County Hall, Beverley came to view prospective sites for the school to continue while the building was renovated. These were the Chapel in Selby Road, the Old School and the village institute in the main street.

In August 1930 a proposed reconstructions plan was complete and records show that on 22 September 1930

"The school is in the hands of the builders..."

The cost of remodelling the school was £5,570. A piece of land, 2.22 acres, to the rear of the school (the field) was bought from Mr A Mason at a cost of £235. Tenders were accepted from:

W Birch and Sons Ltd	Building Work	£4785 0s. 0d
Leeds Marble Works Ltd	Heating	£ 158 0s. 0d.
Helliwell and Co	Steel Window	f 233 10s. 0d.
Helliwell and Co	Fanlight panes	17s. 6d.
James Gibbons Ltd	Cloak rails & fittings	f 46 15s. 0d.
Doulton & Co	Sanitary fittings	£ 23 9s. 9d.
L Cooper Ltd	Roof principals	£ 69 0s. 0d.
Fencing to be erected		£ 105 0s. 0d.

A strip of land comprising 10 perches to the side of the school was bought from Mr R Roantree for £10.

The Board of Education approved the site and the expenditure of £360 which includes purchase monies, cost of fencing and legal charges.

The sub-committee recommended that action should be taken to approve the plans for remodelling the school hall by making it larger. The proposed plan would cost an extra £300. Proposals were approved and authorised and the County Architect was asked to proceed.

While these extensive alterations were taking place the pupils continued to be taught, although they were divided into three separate venues.

The infants went to the Old School. There were 62 children. The Old School was rented for U. 10s.0d per week. This included heat, light and cleaning. There was sufficient area for playing in a field nearby which was rented for £1 for six months from Mr G Marshall.

Standards I and II went to the Chapel in Selby Road. There were 45 pupils. The rent was £1.10s.0d per week which included heat, light and cleaning. There was sufficient area for playing.

The remainder, Standards III and IV were taken to the village Institute. The rent was U. 10s.0d for a week, which included heat and light and cleaning. A portion of an adjoining field was rented from Mr T Buttle for £1 for six months for playing in.

Included in the alterations provisions were to be made to provide equipment and apparatus for fitting out a utility room to the West end of the school for use as manual and domestic centres.

Lessons continued for nine months until the work was complete. The school log for 22 June 1931 reads:

"Work resumed in this practically new school - Monday"

The school was formally re-opened by Col. Saltmarsh JP on 2nd July 1932.

The school was indeed very modern for its time. Water closets across the yard and running cold water indoors. Previously water was collected from the roof and filtered through sand for drinking and washing. Metal window frames replaced old wooden high windows, so there was more light in the classrooms and children could now see out! Two large coke stoves stood like sentries in the hall which heated large iron pipes and radiators in the classrooms. The infant class still had an open coal fire. One new classroom had been added to the East end of the school and an office for the headmaster above the infant classroom which had access via a splendid spiral staircase in the hall. The new utility room was equipped to cook the school meals and also with woodworking tools. The museum exhibits were displayed in glass topped cabinets which filled one wall of the hall. Articles dug up around Holme-on-Spalding Moor were on show. Roman coins and pottery which had been excavated at Throlam Farm which was the site of a burial 'barrow', buckles and pieces of jewellery and all types of treasure which pupils found. There were many flints and stone axe heads and various stuffed fish and animals and skins on show. In 1955 some of the Roman artifacts was taken to London and shown on BBC television, "Animals, Vegetables and Mineral". New cloakrooms were provided at each end of the school but still the playground was segregated.

In 1933 Mr & Mrs Samson Feather retired from the School. They were presented with a silver jewel case for Mrs Feather, a silver cigarette box for Mr Feather and a silver fruit dish on an ebony stand for both of them. They retired to their family home "The Beeches".

On the 1st of March 1933 Mr John C Jaques took over the headship of Holme-on-Spalding Primary School. He was less severe than Mr Feather but still commanded a great deal of respect. He was also a keen gardener and continued the good work in the school garden. He added more flowering shrubs, a greenhouse, pond and aviary. The greenhouse and aviary were built at the back of the closets. The back wall of the closets formed one wall of both the greenhouse and aviary. The school at this time had athletic, cricket and football teams. There was no provision for children who were ill. One child on the roll missed 34 weeks because of a stay in Hull Infirmary following a mastoid operation. Following this he had a year of convalescence but still completed his schooling without missing a class and won a gardening prize when he left school. There were no remedial teachers and no home tutors.

Games in the playground were things like marbles, whip and top, skipping, hopscotch and chasing.

Most children walked to school or came by pony and trap. Mr Jack and Percy Roantree ran a school bus which collected children from Skiff Lane, Drain Lane, Bursea and Arglam, but only those more than three miles from school. Those closer to school had to walk.

Mr Jaques lived in a house down Selby Road, which he had built at Station Lane end. Older boys went to garden for him and pick up leaves or dead head the flowers. Mr and Mrs Kell were the caretakers and Mrs Kell cooked the lunches for the children.

On the 4th September 1938 electric light was installed throughout the school.

On 3rd September 1939 Great Britain declared war on Germany. Many male members of staff were 'called up' to fight. Those too old did fire watching. The teachers were substituted by students and Nuns. They taught until the end of the war. All the school windows were taped and black out curtains were put up at the windows. After the war these curtains were used to make gym knickers for the girls and must have kept pupils supplied for years! The older girls and Mrs Hird did the necessary needlework!

Evacuees from Hull came to the village, those mainly who had relatives living here. On the 7th July 1940, 85 evacuees from the Marist College were entered into Holme School. The evacuees were brought to the station in the village and "collected" by families willing to look after them. Those without relatives or with several brothers or sisters must have had a very difficult time. We can only imagine the trauma of parents who put those children onto the train and didn't even know where they were going let alone who was going to take care of them. The pupils of the time tell me the evacuees settled in very well considering their plight.

Discipline at this time was still very strict. The lessons were still the basics but the girls did do cookery and the boys woodwork. The playground was still segregated. Many pupils walked to school using the public footpaths around the area. There was no remedial help for pupils and parents were not encouraged to come into school. Only once did a former scholar remember her mother coming into school at this time. The pupil had had her head knocked against the blackboard for not knowing the answer to a problem. The child's mother did the teachers washing for her and told her "I shan't be doing your washing any more! You can't put knowledge where there 'int any!"

The school however did have half a day off to watch the hunt meeting and in the Winter everyone went to Church Hill to sledge. Sometimes these outings were hair-raising not to say dangerous. At this time the hill was heavily wooded and sledges came to grief on old stumps. One occasion several boys and one girl decided to sledge down the public footpath which runs down the side of the church towards the Market Weighton road. The footpath was gated at the bottom. Unfortunately the extra weight made the sledge go extra fast and the gate was completely demolished and the sledge came to rest at the opposite side of the road. A good thing traffic then was much lighter than today! The boys had to pay for the damage but the little girl was let off.

As the airfield nearby was a target for bombers some of the male teachers, who were exempt from going away to fight did fire watching.

In 1942 a child was knocked down outside the school. Even then traffic was a problem. I wonder what the present day authorities would make of that.

In 1943 the Roman Catholic School started to be supplied with hot dinners from the school. They were transported on a tricycle with an insulated box similar to ice cream carts of the time. At first 25 dinners a day were taken there.

In September 1944 the general utility was made into a kitchen.

Mr Kell was the school caretaker and Mrs Kell worked in the kitchen. In May 1945 Mr Kell fell while winding the clock at the front of the school. The clock is double faced, one side to the outside of the building, which is a local landmark. The other face looks down into the school hall. Many

pupils learnt to tell the time from that timepiece. Unfortunately building alterations made the clock unusable as access into the false ceiling to wind the clock is totally unsafe. By May 1946 Mr Kell retired and Mr Shaw took over as caretaker and Mrs Shaw began work in the kitchen. The present kitchen was built in 1948.

Mr George Bowman was appointed headmaster on the 2 May 1949 and served until September 1953 when Mr Warner took over the position until January 1954.

During this time the fence in the playground came down and the children were allowed to play together.

On June the 2nd 1953 Princess Elizabeth was crowned Queen Elizabeth II. All the school had a day off and went to the field at Rush Corner, near the Beeches to play sports and games. Afterwards everyone had tea in the institute.

Most children still walked to school but some had bicycles who lived a long way from school.

On the 1st of September 1952 Market Weighton County Secondary School opened. Children who were eleven years of age went to Market Weighton until they were fifteen. The school was large, modern and airy. The children from the surrounding villages, Hotham, Sanction, Londesborough, Goodmanham, Foggathorpe, Shiptonthorpe and Market Weighton all attended. Before moving on the village children did not go to look around the new school. They had to catch a bus, sometimes after a cycle ride to the stop, and have lunch at school and get used to moving around to different lessons with different teachers. No wonder one pupil was so overcome on seeing the large shiny gymnasium he ran around shouting and so received the "slipper" on his first day!

One job hated by the big boys was burying the kitchen rubbish. It was taken in big metal buckets and buried every week. It must have been a horrible job as all the peelings and waste from the dinners went out together.

The big boys had garden plots which supplied the kitchen with vegetables and fruit and salad produce. The greenhouse grew tomatoes, cucumbers and pot plants. There was a large pond and the lawns were kept in immaculate fashion by the boys who mowed the grass on a rota basis.

Games in the playground were catching, ball games, marbles and occasionally roller skates! Vaulting horses and mats were used for PE Lessons and hoops and balls also. The radio was used for music to movement.

The school kept rabbits but I have not found out if these were for use in the kitchens.

The school had regular visits from the dentist and the nurse.

Mr Phillip Fussey took up the position as headmaster on 4 January 1954.

By the mid-fifties it was common place for the headteacher to teach the oldest class and prepare them for sitting the 11 -plus examination as Mr Fussey did. New pupils started school without ever stepping inside the building before their first day. Their starting date was the beginning of the term when they had their fifth birthday. The roll for September 1955 shows 70 boys, 63 girls - total 133. The infant classroom had two doors either side of an open coal fire which had a huge nursery guard around it. On the opposite wall there were windows and a small sink with a cold tap. At either end

of the room there were black boards. Tables were arranged in small groups. The classroom had a "house" corner and a "shop". The shop was made up of empty boxes and cartons brought by the children from home.

If an infant was unwell the infant teacher, Miss Shingles, could unroll a mattress for the patient to lie down on by the fire. All infants were given rest time in an afternoon. The children had to rest with their heads resting down on folded arms on the table tops. It seemed endless at the time but I expect memory plays tricks! On occasions some children did fall asleep.

The playground seemed enormous with huge, almost adult-sized children hurtling around it. There was a climbing frame with a net but otherwise nothing to play on or with. Ball games, hop scotch, skipping and marbles were played. The garden was fenced still but was used for art or sewing lessons in the summer. Many flowering trees and a pond were in the garden.

All children had a bottle of milk at playtime. Each one had 1/3rd of a pint bottle and a straw.

Children either went home for lunch or stayed for a cooked meal. The majority stayed. Lunch breaks were from twelve o'clock to 1 o'clock. The school day began at nine o'clock and finished at ten minutes to four. Little wonder the infants needed a rest! The canteen was heated by two coke stoves, the same style as in the school hall. The kitchen area had a coke stove too. These must have been very hard work to keep fuelled and very dirty, not to mention smoky on a windy day. Mrs shave worked in the canteen and Mr Shaw was the caretaker. He rode a bike with a carrier on it to school.

In the mid fifties the airfield nearby was manned by American and Canadian forces. Many of their children attended the school. It was not unusual to have black children in the class. The little Canadian boys wore buckskin suits with fringes and the girls had a different pretty dress every day.

I myself remember Jimmy Barnes and Dianne Blake. I wonder where they are now?

Mr Fussey lived locally in Port Royal in a house which is now called Midfield House.

Mrs Cuthbert was the senior infants teacher who also lived in the village. She was also the needlework teacher who taught knitting too. Mrs Cuthbert lived in the end house on Selby Road now known as Candleford House.

Regular visitors to school were the dentist and nurse. The school nurse wore a brown uniform and seemed very severe. She looked at hands, nails and closely inspected heads! Those with "dirty heads" were sent home to be treated and were reinspected before being allowed back into school. She drove a Morris 100G car and always brought her dog - a spaniel.

The dentist came and brought his caravan which was parked inside the front gate. Those whose fate it was for treatment went off nervously and without their mothers but came back seemingly unscathed by the experience.

In May 1954 family service began in the canteen. This was two older children bringing the meal to the table and serving it. They also cleared the tables after dinner.

The police made visits to the school and spoke to the children about road safety. These talks were accompanied by film shows. Also cycle checks were carried out. By now more children had

bicycles but still the majority walked and a few, on outlying farms at Bursea and Harswell, came on the school bus.

The summer holidays were now of six weeks duration although days off for the Yorkshire Show were also included. Potato picking week was still in October which was half term.

Mr Summers of Pocklington began weekly music sessions with two upper classes each Monday in September 1958. These classes were singing and learning to play the recorder.

In January 1959 attendance plummeted to 35 % owing to 85 pupils being absent, out of a total of 134 pupils, with measles.

In December 1961 Miss Betty Stephenson was installed as the first and only headmistress, to date.

Miss Stephenson adopted a system of prefects, the school was divided into houses and sports activities began to play a larger role. A football team and netball team were formed. Several school outings were enjoyed by the pupils. Places visited were Northern Dairies factory in Station Lane, a printing works, the Parish Church, York and Filet'.

Miss Stephenson also instigated a school uniform. A lively meeting of parents and teachers decided that royal blue would be the school colour. The girls would have kilts and the boys grey trousers and red caps with the school badge. Many successful scholars sat their 11 plus at Holme-on-Spalding Moor and went on to Beverley High School, Bridlington Boarding School, York College for Girls, Bar Convent in York or Selby School.

Many visitors came into school. The Dairy Queen - who told everyone to drink lots of milk! The policeman who told all pupils to "At the kerb, Halt, look right, look left, look right again. If all's clear, walk - don't run!" Our kerb drill! Usually before the Summer Holidays the policeman came on a different visit. This time to tell pupils of the dangers of going off with strangers. This was a warning made annually but I suspect children did not worry too much as everyone knew everyone so well that a stranger would be well spotted very quickly. Our village policeman would quite often park outside the school at leaving time in his shiny black Ford Anglia. He soon spotted anyone playing about near the road.

Another regular visitor was the Vicar, The Reverend D B Hasler. What a character! He wore a battered trilby hat and he smoked the most evil smelling pipe ever. He made his own tobacco from whatever he found in the hedge rows. No-one has the recipe as far as we know! He was a gentleman and well respected and loved by those of his flock and those of other faiths in the parish. He never differentiated between members of the parish. If a person was ill the Vicar would be sure to visit whatever their faith and more often than not would take some grapes. He drove a long nosed Morris with running boards. Even then it seemed ancient. Eventually the car gave up but the village bought Mr Hasler a brand new Morris 1000 which he drove for many years. He came to school every Friday morning and took the assembly. His usual prayer was for Africa.

"God Bless Africa,  
Guard her children,  
Guide her rulers  
and give her Peace. Amen"

The playground now had a climbing frame and scramble net. No safety flooring or rubber mats. It stood straight onto the tarmac. There was a sandpit or long and high jump. Sports days were for

everyone. All pupils competed. Games in the playground were skipping, catching, marbles, chasing and blocky. Blocky was a version of hide and seek. One person had to close their eyes and count and the rest went to hide. The "hidiers" had to try to get back and touch the wall or drainpipe where the "seeker" had counted and the cry of "Block I-2-3" made them safe. If the hider was spotted by the seeker the same cry caught them out.

The dentist and nurse were still regular visitors and also the school doctor. He came in to perform medical examinations on pupils at entry to the infants and again just before moving on to secondary school. Checks were made on growth, development, ear and eye examinations were done. Polio vaccinations were done at Selby Road Chapel which at the time was used as the baby clinic.

Nativity plays were performed with great enthusiasm. The spiral staircase being absolutely ideal for the Angel Gabriel and the heavenly host to appear from. These plays and May Day were supported by the families of the children taking part.

At Christmas a party involved all the children. Everyone brought something to eat. The party was held in the canteen and then all the school was entertained in the hall by a magician. All the children made paper hats in school which they wore. For two or three days bread trays were brought around *school until* the party food was all eaten up.

By 1962 the regime at Holme-on-Spalding Moor Primary School was one of industrious but friendly persuasion. Parents were welcomed into school. Children wanted to do well to please their teachers. Many, many teachers, pupils and other adults have passed through the doors of Holme School. Hundreds of pupils have been stirred to find out more about the world they inhabit by the zealous work of their tutors. What better gift, to pass on knowledge to future generations and what better custodians of a building with such a past!

Acknowledgement to:

Mr John Wilson

Mr & Mrs Edwin Laverack

Mrs Nellie Levitt

Mrs Madge Morley

Mr Ken Taylor

#### B I B L I O G R A P H Y

The Archives at Beverley

Kellys Directory of the East Riding

Mr & Mrs Edwin Laverack (former pupils)

Mrs Madge Morley nee Simms (former pupil)

Mr Cliff Robson (present Headmaster)

Mr Ken Taylor (former pupil)

Mr John Wilson (former pupil)